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SUBJECT: MFA DEMORALIZED AND WEAKENED UNDER FM FOTYGA

REF: A. WARSAW 02040

[1](#)B. WARSAW 01522

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR MARY T. CURTIN FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: President Lech Kaczynski's tight grip on foreign policy has squeezed out his own Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) with a corresponding loss of effectiveness in European institutions and overall quality in Polish foreign policy. The politicization of top and mid-level positions, frequent personnel changes, introverted leadership and long-standing vacancies at MFA stand as evidence of the President's disregard for the foreign policy establishment. As a result, Poland's considerable foreign policy talent, proven during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, seems forgotten by a government focused on domestic matters. The leadership remains solid on its foreign policy principles, including its attachment to a strong U.S.-Polish bilateral relationship and commitment to overseas engagements, but its effectiveness in pursuing a number of regional diplomatic objectives has clearly declined. END SUMMARY.

MFA Foreign Policy Role Diminishing

[1](#)2. (C) President Lech Kaczynski and his brother PM Jaroslaw Kaczynski came to power a year ago on the anti-corruption platform of the Law and Justice (PiS) party and have since focused their attention largely on domestic issues. The Kaczynskis see their chief accomplishments to date as the creation of the new Anti-Corruption Bureau and the reform of Polish military intelligence to root out the remnants of Communist-era secret police influence. They want a stronger presidency and more centralized government. To accomplish these goals much of PM Kaczynski's efforts have gone toward creating and maintaining a governing majority at almost any cost, including bringing in as coalition partners the populist Self Defense (SO) and conservative Catholic nationalist League of Polish Families (LPR). Foreign policy is often perceived as almost an afterthought.

FM Fotyga: Loyalty Trumping Expertise

[1](#)3. (C) The Kaczynskis' inward-looking approach, desire to strengthen the presidency, and emphasis on loyalty over expertise have put increasing pressure on foreign policy professionals at the MFA. In February 2006 President Kaczynski replaced the PiS government's first foreign minister, career diplomat Stefan Meller, with then Deputy FM Anna Fotyga, a long-time confidante with little foreign policy experience. The media-clumsy Fotyga also has difficulty with internal management of the MFA's professional staff, with whom she seems to share a strong mutual distrust. Eighty percent of Poles cannot identify her as the foreign minister, and 80% of those who can think she performs poorly. Commentators and bureaucrats alike lament her

indecisiveness, and the common perception is that Fotyga consults with the president on the smallest matter. In a recent press report an unnamed MFA official said MFA staff refer to her office as the "black hole," because it takes weeks for decisions to come out. For example, Deputy FM Barbara Tuge-Erecinska was nominated as to London in May 2006 but did not receive the necessary documentation from Fotyga until October 26, barely in time for President Kaczynski's November visit to London! Indeed, Poland now has 16 ambassadorial posts unfilled around the world including at the EU, arguably Poland's most important post abroad after Washington.

¶4. (C) The morale of foreign policy professionals at MFA has been hurt in part by Fotyga's weakness and the Kaczynskis, lack of interest, but perhaps even more of late by the politicization of personnel decisions. In the past political appointments did not reach below the level of Under Secretary; department directors and below were assigned

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according to civil service rules and the MFA personnel system. However, on October 27 a new civil service law entitled "Act on the State Personnel Pool" entered into force, which now empowers the government to fill a much wider range of public posts with political appointees.

Personnel Changes Taking a Toll

¶5. (C) Until recently the major thrust of the Kaczynskis personnel changes at MFA (as at MOD and elsewhere) has been to root out anyone with links to the former Communist regime. We learned recently from MFA contacts that President Kaczynski will not name anyone to an ambassadorial position who was educated or trained in the former Soviet Union. For example, the presidential chancellery recently refused an MFA proposal to nominate as Ambassador to Iraq career diplomat

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Stanislaw Smolen (a Middle East expert and previously MFA liaison to the Polish Multinational Division Center South in Iraq), apparently on the sole grounds that he had attended the Soviet diplomatic academy in Moscow. Smolen has instead been sent to Baghdad as designated Charge d'Affaires, with no immediate prospect of an ambassador being named.

¶6. (C) Recently, however, the Kaczynskis' suspicions extended to intellectuals associated with the Solidarity movement, particularly the former Freedom Union (UW) party and its successor Civic Platform (PO). Anna Grupinska, summarily fired in September as Director of the MFA UN Department, told PolCouns that Fotyga and the Kaczynskis had not trusted her because of her close association with former Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek, a UW founder. Former MFA Americas Department Director Henryk Szlajfer, an extremely close Geremek confidant and one of the most senior career officials at MFA, received a phone call from his own deputy on October 27 (while on a two-month teaching stint in the U.S.) informing him that he had been dismissed from his post and assigned to head the MFA Records Department. The Kaczynskis' distrust of UW/PO connections can even extend to their own party members. We have heard that PiS politician Pawel Zalewski, Chairman of the Sejm Foreign Affairs Committee, a moderate working actively to promote a Polish-German rapprochement, was passed over for foreign minister because he had belonged to UW in the 1990s. Indeed, the press speculates that Fotyga is committed to rescreening anyone appointed under former FMs Geremek and Krzysztof Skubiszewski of UW.

¶7. (C) The list of senior career staff shunted into less influential positions recently includes Africa & Middle East Director Krzysztof Plominski and Consular Affairs Director Tomasz Lis, who were both dismissed October 27 with Szlajfer, as well as Pawel Dobrowolski, the former MFA spokesman who was replaced in June for failing to denounce vigorously

enough a German newspaper story that satirized the Kaczynski brothers. (N.B. The story was widely believed to have been the reason that President Kaczynski canceled his participation in a long-planned Weimar Triangle Meeting.) In addition, MFA Under Secretary and seasoned diplomat Stanislaw Komorowski resigned from his position (but not his foreign service status) after arguing with the president (a long-time personal friend) that coalition political antics were hurting Poland's image abroad. Civil service protections mean that none of these professionals were dismissed from the MFA entirely - most have remained, some even receiving ambassadorships, but their influence in policy-making is dramatically reduced.

Kaczynskis See President's Role
as Primary, Yet PM Becoming Engaged

18. (C) In addition to these personnel upheavals, there has been a general shift of decision-making away from the MFA to the presidency, with a lowering of the foreign policy profile of the Prime Minister. This is a deliberate strategy, part of the Kaczynskis' program to promote the presidency. While former President Alexander Kwasniewski expanded the role of the president in foreign policy decision-making (especially on security matters), his prime ministers maintained their strong role in foreign policy, and had foreign affairs advisors and staffs to reflect that role. But the president does not have a large foreign policy staff, and his new national security advisor has not, thus far, played an active role except on security policy.

19. (C) However, the Prime Minister is beginning to accept that he must play a stronger role in foreign policy, as evidenced by his September visit to the U.S., and his October 30 visit to Berlin to start to repair Polish-German relations. His foreign policy advisor told us the PM had not, at the beginning wanted a strong foreign policy role, both by personal preference and because of the Kaczynskis, commitment to strengthening the presidency. But he had gradually been drawn into it, and will likely become increasingly more involved. Several people told us that the decision to send the president, rather than the prime minister, to the EU Summit at Lahti reflected the president's desire to meet Russian president Putin, rather than a broader plan to emphasize the president's role in foreign policy.

Comment

110. (C) The upheavals at the foreign ministry had been anticipated for some time, and were made more difficult by the absence of a group of strong foreign policy specialists amidst the domestically-focused PiS leadership. The loss of clout and personnel upheavals at the MFA have clearly had an

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impact on Poland's ability to lead on regional issues, a loss noted by EU diplomats in particular. But while the core of MFA professionals grumble, they are solid professionals who remain committed to advancing Polish foreign policy. For the most part, other professionals have replaced those who were removed.

111. (C) More importantly, the fundamentals of Poland's foreign policy remain solid. The brothers prize Poland's relationship with the United States. In his initial speech as Prime Minister, Jaroslaw Kaczynski stated, "Poland is in alliance with the United States, this alliance has been maintained and strengthened by some joint undertakings." He and the President have reiterated the primacy of our relationship on numerous occasions. The Kaczynskis, steadfast support for coalition operations in Iraq and quick decisions to commit troops to Lebanon and Afghanistan underscore their commitment. Their domestic coalition

partners do not agree with these policies, and have taken advantage of recent disarray in the governing coalition to voice their opposition to the Iraq and Afghanistan deployments, but they have not been allowed a role in foreign or security policy decision-making, and we do not foresee this changing. But Poland's effectiveness in the EU and elsewhere has been diminished, and its ability to lead will take some time to repair.

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